# NOTES ON THE BACCHAE

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE *Bacchae*, being from one point of view a religious drama, a kind of "mystery play," is full of allusions both to the myth and to the religion of Dionysus.

1. The Myth, as implied by Euripides. Semelfi, daughter of Cadmus, being loved by Zeus, asked her divine lover to appear to her once in his full glory; he came, a blaze of miraculous lightning, in the ecstasy of which Semelfi died, giving premature birth to a son. Zeus, to save this child's life and make him truly God as well as Man, tore open his own Hcsh and therein fostered the child till in due time, by a miraculous and mysterious Second Birth, the child of Semelfi came to full life as God,

2. The Religion of Dionysus is hard to formulate or even describe, both because of its composite origins and because of its condition of constant vitality, fluctuation, and development.

*(a)* The first datum, apparently, is the introduction from Thrace of the characteristic God of the wild northern mountains, a God of Intoxication, of Inspiration, a giver of superhuman or immortal life, His worship is superposed upon that of divers old Tree or Vegetation Gods, already worshipped in